

# **Summer Food Service Program / Seamless Summer Option**

## **Overview**

The United States Department of Agriculture's Summer Food Service Program is a federally-funded, state-administered program that relies on innovative and collaborative efforts to reach children in need. This program ensures that low-income children continue to receive nutritious meals when school is not in session. Providers are reimbursed for meals, that meet Federal nutrition guidelines, served to all children 18 years old and under at approved sites in areas with significant concentrations of low-income children.

The Summer Food Service Program has reduced paperwork and administrative requirements for School Food Authorities, making it easier to feed children in low-income areas during the summer months or during the extended breaks of a year-round school schedule.

## **Terminology**

**Sites** – Locations in the community where children receive meals in a safe and supervised environment. Sites may be located in a variety of settings including schools, parks, community centers, churches, and migrant centers. Sites work directly with sponsors.

**Sponsors** – Entities which run the program and communicate with the State agency. Schools, local government agencies, camps, faith-based and other non-profit community organizations that have the ability to manage a food service program may be SFSP sponsors. Sponsors attend the State agency's training; locate eligible sites; hire, train and supervise staff; arrange for meals to be prepared and delivered; monitor sites; and prepare claims for reimbursement.

**Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)** – A summer meal program option that allows School Food Authorities (SFAs), local government agencies, private non-profit organizations, universities/colleges, and community/faith-based organizations to provide free meals to children 18 and younger in low-income areas during summer months. The SFSP has unique meal pattern requirements and reimbursement rates.

## **What is the Summer Food Service Program?**

The Food and Nutrition Service, an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), administers the SFSP at the federal level. In Idaho, the State Department of Education administers the programs, which are run locally by approved sponsors, including school districts, local government agencies, camps, or private nonprofit organizations. Sponsors provide free meals to children at a central site, such as a school or a community center. Sponsors receive payments from USDA, through their State agency, for the meals they serve.

## *Administration*

The State agency (SA) administers the program by recruiting sponsors and sites, providing training and technical assistance to sponsors, monitoring sponsors and sites, processing claims, and distributing reimbursements to sponsors. Sponsors recruit and provide training to sites, report meal counts, monitor sites, and submit claims to the State agency. Sites feed and supervise the kids, provide activities, and conduct outreach to draw kids to their meals.

## *Eligibility and Types of Sites*

Eligibility for summer operation is established by school boundary or geographical area defined by census data where 50 percent or more of children qualify for free or reduced-price school meals. The

types of sites allowed to participate in the SFSP are open, enrolled, or camp sites. Open sites operate in low-income areas where at least half of the children come from families with incomes at or below 185 percent of the federal poverty level, making them eligible for free and reduced-price school meals. Meals are served free to any child at the open site. Enrolled sites provide free meals to children enrolled in an activity program at the site where at least half of them are eligible for free and reduced-price meals. At most sites, children can receive up to two reimbursable meals each day.

#### *Application/Renewal Process*

The application/renewal process begins in late January of each year and is available through MyIdahoCNP. Applications are to be completed by the potential sponsor and are due to the State agency by the first Friday in May. If SFA kitchen managers or staff members are interested in starting a SFSP program at a specific school, contact the school district food service director to discuss starting the program.

#### *Training*

Sponsors must attend a mandatory SFSP training from the State agency (usually held during April). It is then the sponsor's responsibility to train their site staff on the rules and regulations of the program.

#### *Summer Food Service Program Meal Pattern*

The SFSP meal pattern allows sponsors to serve appetizing meals that meet a child's nutritional needs that are consistent with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. Meal pattern requirements assist the menu planner in providing well-balanced, nutritious meals that supply the kinds and amounts of foods that help children meet their nutrient and energy needs. The SFSP meal pattern has no calorie caps, does not require vegetable subgroups, and does not use the same whole grain requirements of NSLP. A site can serve up to two meals per day consisting of any combination of breakfast, lunch, supper, and snack, except for the combination of lunch and supper. For example, a site could serve breakfast and lunch *or* lunch and snack, but *not* lunch and supper. All meals and service times must be documented and approved in MyIdahoCNP prior to operation.

#### **What is the Seamless Summer Option?**

SFAs participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) or the School Breakfast Program (SBP) are eligible to apply for the Seamless Summer Option (SSO) instead of SFSP. SSO utilizes the same meal service rules and claiming procedures used during the regular school year. To determine which is most appropriate for a specific school, use the program comparison chart (see the Summer Food Service Program section in the Additional Resources link). This chart shows how SFSP, SSO, and traditional school meals differ. The purpose of this comparison chart is to inform and encourage more SFAs to provide meals in the summer and other times when school is not in session.

#### **Why is the Summer Food Service Program Important?**

During the school year, many children receive free and reduced-price breakfast and lunch through the School Breakfast and National School Lunch Programs. When school lets out, many of these children are at risk of hunger. Hunger is one of the most severe roadblocks to the learning process.

Lack of nutrition during the summer months may set up a cycle for poor performance once school begins again and make children more prone to illness and other health issues. The SFSP is designed to fill that nutrition gap and make sure children get the nutritious meals they need.

#### **Resources**

Additional resources may be available for this topic. Please check the Idaho School Nutrition Reference Guide website for copies of manuals, user guides and helpful links to relevant subject matter.